

2014 Town Vote Board of Selectmen and Water and Sewer Commissioners' Majority and Minority Reports

In preparation for Voting Day on March 11th the Board of Selectmen, Water & Sewer Commissioners, and the Warrant Article Petitioner would like to present to you the following information for your consideration prior to placing your votes on this year's ballot.

The premise of the information given is that each elected official was able to cast their vote to be in favor or against each warrant article as presented (excluding non-appropriation petition warrant articles in which only the petitioner's views are listed – as per state statute requirements, and Water/Sewer non-bonding articles which are voted on by the Water & Sewer Commissioners as their governing body). Once their votes were cast they then were given the opportunity to write a brief piece to explain their thoughts on why they chose the position they did.

We thank you for your participation in the democratic process and look forward to seeing you on March 11th!

Article 3 – DRAM CUP HILL Water Storage Tank Renovation - \$330,000

Water and Sewer Commissioner's Majority Report – Commissioners' Courage, Putnam, and White are in unanimous support of this article.

Article 4 - Operating Budget - \$13,151,231

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report –Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The 2014 budget represents an increase of 4.5% (\$560,140) over the 2013 approved budget, driven by increases in debt service, benefits, insurance, elections and contract increases. These items represent 72% (\$401,076) of the total increase and are also included in the default budget of \$12,848,633. A significant portion of the increase is a result of increased cost in areas over which we have no control, driven primarily by the following items:

- \$194,000 - Debt Service Increase (warrant articles approved by voters last year)

- \$151,500 - Benefits - Health Care: increase of 6.0%, no change in plan; Retirement System: absorbing the second half of a large increase implemented last year due to the

adjustment to the investment rate of return; Workers Compensation Insurance increases

- \$ 36,500 - Property and Liability and Workers' Compensation Insurance: increase due to high claims history

- \$ 16,000 - MACC Base increase

- \$ 14,000 - Elections – increased because of the additional elections to be held in 2014

To ensure we meet the short and long term needs of the town, we also need to address some items that have been deferred over the years, but must now be acted upon if we are to maintain the level of services currently being provided by the town. The increase in this area is primarily driven by:

- \$ 73,500 - Merit increase of 2% for town employees

- \$ 96,000 - Additional funding for building maintenance (Town Hall exterior painting, clock repair and utilities and ground maintenance associated with the new Ambulance facility, and the backfill of two highway positions (partially offset by a reduction in part-time hours).

- \$ 25,000 - Addition of a School Resource Officer in July; three quarters of a full year to be funded by the school; Six months' salary and benefits.

The Town Administrator and Department Heads have done an outstanding job crafting a budget that recognizes the fact that the many taxpayers are struggling with this economy, while at the same time ensuring that the critical services that we all expect will continue. For a number of years we were able to keep budget increase very low, through what we hoped was the worst part of the economic downturn. We continue this year to face not only some significant unexpected increases, but also the reality that the time had come to replace some of our service vehicles. Those items presented to you reflect the priorities of the majority of the Board of Selectmen.

Article 5 - Wastewater Treatment Operating Budget - \$1,809,111

Water and Sewer Commissioner's Majority Report – Commissioners Courage, Putnam, and White are in unanimous support of this article.

Article 6 - Water Department Operating Budget - \$1,369,255

Water and Sewer Commissioner's Majority Report – Commissioners' Courage, Putnam, and White are in unanimous support of this article.

Article 7 – South Street Railroad Crossing - RENEWAL

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Article is a reauthorization to appropriate monies already raised for the South Street railroad crossing project. Significant delays in permitting and obtaining required authorization from the railroad has hindered the implementation of this project. Given the railroad's continued uncooperative approach to this project, the Public Works Department has explored an alternative solution to the drainage problems in the area and is optimistic that this new approach can be implemented soon. **There will be no tax impact.**

Article 8 – Bridge Replacement Cap. Reserve - \$125,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

There are a number of bridges in town that are in various stages of failing. This is the start of a fund to engineer and fix them. The initial \$125,000 funds the matching monies to repair the Jennison Road Bridge and start the engineering for the next bridge. The next bridge will be determined by the engineering assessments that are done.

Article 9 – Fire Ladder Truck #1 Replacement – 7-year Lease/Purchase - \$117,500 (Annual payment \$117,500/Total purchase Price \$770,000)

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

This request would replace a critical piece of apparatus used by the Milford Fire Department to protect the life and property of the Milford residents and visitors. The current ladder truck is 25 years old and has exceeded its normal life expectancy, and spending more tax dollars to repair and maintain the current truck would be fiscally short-sided. Replacing this aging piece of equipment is critical in ensuring public safety, as the new truck would come ready-equipped with all the latest fire-fighting technologies, providing trained staff the quickest and most efficient opportunity to protect Milford's families and businesses.

***Article 10 – Dump Truck (6 Cubic Yard) – 5-Year Lease/Purchase
(Annual Payment \$30,000/Total Purchase Price \$144,000)***

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

This request will put back in service a vital piece of equipment required in order for the Public Works Department to successfully complete its required work. Because of age and repair costs, a 1995 truck was taken out of service and the Department has had to operate without this important vehicle leading to longer plowing routes during the winter months. Replacing this important piece of equipment is necessary to maximize the efficiency of the Department.

***Article 11 – Transfer Station Scale House/Office Replacement -
\$74,500***

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The scale house and break room trailer used by our employees at the transfer station are in deplorable condition. For many years we were uncertain whether or not the state would force us to relocate the transfer station and therefore the Board was reluctant to put money into facilities that we might have been forced to raze. Over the past few years we have gained confidence that the state will not disrupt operation at our current facility. The scale house and break room trailer are both structurally deficient, containing dry rot, holes in the building, broken tiles and unlevelled floors. This article proposes to replace the current scale house and break room trailer with one mobile office unit that will contain the scale house, supervisor's office, break room, locker room and storage space. Though not expected, if we were forced to relocate the transfer station in the future, the mobility of this office would ensure that the money we spend today on this mobile office would not be wasted. The amount requested covers all replacement costs.

Article 12 – AFSCME Contract - \$17,600

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Board of Selectmen are unanimously in support of the work, achieved by our negotiating team to develop and negotiate a contract that is fair, and agreed to, by all parties.

Article 13 – Social Services - \$30,000

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

Nineteen agencies provide immeasurable assistance to Milford citizens, thus greatly reducing the amount of welfare dollars that the town is obligated to pay for citizens who qualify.

Article 14 – Non-Emergency Community Transportation Bus Service - \$28,950

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC) was established in 2008 by representatives from each of the communities participating in the Souhegan Valley Rides bus service. SVTC oversees the transit service and works with the municipalities and local organizations to provide seamless transportation service based on community needs. Each participating town shares in the cost of providing this demand-response bus service based on the annual percentage of rides provided to residents of each town and on the anticipated costs to provide the bus service. SVTC’s administrative expenses and free bus pass program are funded through grants and donations from local foundations, civic groups, businesses and citizens. Milford continues to lead the way with its higher rate of use and Milford’s continued participation is critical.

Souhegan Valley Rides, better known as “the Blue Bus”, offers a dial-a-ride type wheelchair-accessible bus service to citizens of Milford, Amherst, Brookline and Hollis. A pilot program was implemented in Month Vernon in 2013 and plans as in place to implement a pilot program in Wilton on March 1, 2014. The driver, bus and call center services are purchased from the Nashua Transit System.

Souhegan Valley Rides focuses on providing transportation to non-emergency health care appointments and assisting those in greatest need – senior citizens, residents living with a disability, and residents who are unable to drive. Other residents of the participating towns may use the service as space is available. By using local funding to leverage federal transportation funding, the service is able to operate five days a week. Most rides are to non-emergency healthcare appointments. Other destinations include social service agencies, pharmacies, senior centers, and town facilities. In addition, rides are available on Mondays and Thursdays to four local shopping centers.

Demand for the service continues to grow and currently provides an average of 335 rides per month. As of January 1, 2014, Souhegan Valley Rides had provided 13,042 rides of which 74% or 9673 rides were used by Milford residents. Milford residents continue to use the lion’s share of the service.

Article 15 – Pumpkin Festival, Holiday Decorations and Plantings - \$20,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Milford Improvement Team (MIT) will be organizing our 25th Annual Pumpkin Festival for 2014. Hundreds of volunteer hours go into making this a spectacular 3 day community event with music and activities for all ages. The event really puts Milford "on the map". Over 32,000 visitors attended the 2013 Pumpkin Festival. The huge success of the festival was due to the collaboration of MIT with several town departments, over 23 local businesses, and hundreds of volunteers. Forty non-profit community based groups participated in 2013 with fundraising and awareness activities that benefit Milford in countless ways. Let's not forget the beautiful plantings downtown which we all enjoy every year and the holiday decorations every winter. This is a collaborative effort by MIT, town employees, and various community groups and businesses to beautify our town. Most of the money goes for extra man hours for the Department of Public Works, Police, Ambulance and Fire Department.

Article 16 – Milford Improvement Team – Operating Budget Support - \$20,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Milford Improvement Team (MIT), a volunteer group for over 25 years, has successfully worked closely with town departments, community organizations and local businesses to make Milford a destination for residing, locating a business or visiting.

MIT has been generously supported by the town over the years (as Do-IT and now MIT) and asks again for your support.

Article 17 – Summer Band Concerts - \$9,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

As we continue to recover from tough economic times, vacations may still be few and far between for a lot of our citizens and these concerts provide an opportunity to get out and enjoy an evening of music and community involvement along the Souhegan River. These concerts are also an on-going and long standing tradition that has been part of Milford's character and charm. These concerts also take place in Emerson Park, a downtown location close to many residents, including a number of senior housing complexes.

Article 18 – Fire Works - \$8,500

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Fougere, Bauer, Federico support this article –

Milford has always been a very special place to live. It is activities such as the July 4th fireworks that have always brought the community together to create traditions that last for generations. Particularly in uncertain economic times, when people tend to stay home rather than take vacations, it is necessary to continue to support activities that people can enjoy here in Milford. The majority feels that this is an important aspect of Milford's community character and that voters should have the opportunity to make a decision on this warrant article.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectmen Daniels and Putnam oppose this article.

The Board of Selectmen struggled this year to present to voters a budget and warrant articles that keep cost contained, yet provided the services expected. In that decision-making process, items were cut that the minority found more beneficial to residents, and a higher priority than taking \$8,500 and blowing it off in a 20-minute fireworks display. In trying to keep your property taxes down, the minority viewed this activity as something that, if desired, could be funded in a different manner. This activity was, in fact, self-funded in 2011 and rejected by taxpayers in 2010. The Recreation Department successfully substituted a bonfire event.

Article 19 – Memorial, Veterans & Labor Day Parade Town Support - \$6,000

Board of Selectmen's Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

The Memorial, Veterans' Day and Labor Day Parades are a way of honoring those who have made our way of life possible through their service and sacrifice. We also support the article in hopes that their actions and their stories will be passed on to future generations and that we never forget those who served, and those who gave all. We support the Labor Day Parade to not only promote community involvement, but also because it presents an opportunity for people to identify the numerous volunteer organizations and services that contribute to Milford's character and way of life. Milford's parades are a land standing and vital component of our community spirit that has been enjoyed by generations of residents through the years. These funds cover the cost for emergency services and DPW expenses associated with these events.

Article 20 – Funding of the Annual Labor Day Parade – \$10,000- By Petition

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

This warrant is to fund the bands for the Labor Day parade. The VFW explained that they cannot afford to fund the entire parade this year as they have in past years. It has been a tradition in town for 68 years in is the largest Labor Day parade in the state. It brings a lot of revenues to the local businesses and offers the opportunity for area businesses and organizations to showcase their services and activities. We feel that it should be continued. There is a search ongoing for private funding.

Article 21 – Sale or Other Disposition of Resources - \$0

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously support this article.

This is a reauthorization Article to allow the Selectmen to proceed to sell gravel resources that exists at the town owned “Brox” property; the original authorization expired in 2013. In 2007 both the Selectmen and Budget committee unanimously support this measure. One of the many benefits to the community that were advocated when the Brox property was purchased was the potential to sell sand and gravel material from the site to help offset the purchase cost; an estimated 1.1 million yards of material exists at the site and worth between \$1 - \$1.5 a yard. A master plan for potential future uses of the property is being updated and any excavation work will respect that plan. Any revenue received from the selling of these materials will either be directed to reducing the tax rate or adding to the Fund Balance. Any other uses of material revenue will require Town Meeting approval; other potential uses include improvement to town roads and infrastructure. This is the first step in a long and open process that will involve numerous public hearings, discussions and required state permitting. With all the pressures on our tax payers, this potential revenue source should be taken advantage of.

Article 22 – Veteran’s Credit – \$53,000 – By Petition

Board of Selectmen’s Minority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Bauer, Federico and Putnam unanimously oppose this article.

While we all appreciate the service and sacrifice of our veterans, we need to keep in mind that not all veterans are eligible for the Veteran's Credit. Only those who served during a conflict-eligible period qualify. They didn't have to be in the conflict (they could have been stationed stateside), they just had to serve during specific years. Our Veteran's Credit is currently \$300 per eligible veteran, with an annual total of \$166,800 granted in Veteran's Credits. This \$166,800 is recouped by raising everyone else's taxes. Increasing the Veteran's Credit by \$100 (to \$400 per eligible veteran) would add another \$53,000 in credits, meaning that we would be raising everyone else's taxes even higher to cover this \$53,000. At a time when we are trying to keep costs (and property taxes) down, the BOS did not feel it was the right time to support this increase. It's also important to know that these Veteran's Credits are granted without regard to income requirements.

Article 23 – Conservation Lands Funds - \$20,000 – By Petition

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, and Putnam oppose this article.

While this request is normally supported by Selectmen, that fact that there were so many other expensive needs and obligations that we have to address, coupled with the fact that the Conservation Commission currently has \$40,000 in their account, prompted the majority of Selectmen to oppose this article this year as part of our effort to control costs and keep property taxes as low as possible.

Board of Selectmen’s Minority Report – Selectmen Bauer and Federico support this article.

The Milford Conservation Commission is asking the town for \$20,000 to add to their existing Land Fund which allows them to purchase easements and available land when appropriate for land preservation and for the enjoyment of all of Milford's citizens.

Article 24 – MileSlip Town Forest – By Petition

Board of Selectmen’s Majority Report – Selectmen Daniels, Fougere, Federico and Putnam oppose this article.

The petition article seeks permission to place a conservation easement on the Mile Slip Town Forest lands. This easement would be controlled by an outside group, taking away local control of the property and potentially restricting uses that are presently allowed on the property or could be allowed on the property in the future. A number of the Selectmen also feel this easement will take away the ability of future residents to make changes to the property if needed. The primary concern of the majority is the loss of local control of the property and that oversight would be handed over to an out-of-town interest with no local ties.

Board of Selectmen's Minority Report – Selectmen Bauer supports this article.

The Milford Conservation Commission is asking the town's permission to acquire an easement to Milesip Town Forest.

Article 25 – Resolution to Overturn Citizens United by passage of a constitutional amendment to regulate political spending – By Petition